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USDA FAS FOR MCHAMBLISS, LREICH, RHUGHES;  
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FROM THE U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [EFIS](#) [PREF](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [AORC](#) [XO](#) [FAO](#)

SUBJECT: FAO UPDATE ON TSUNAMI DISASTER RESPONSE

REF: ROME 0096 (NOTAL)

1. Summary: At a briefing on 9 February for representatives of affected states and donor countries, FAO officials provided a progress report on the agency's response to the Asian tsunami disaster. FAO has received over \$30 million in donor contributions and pledges. This exceeds the organization's initial appeal for \$26.5 million for the first six months, but remains short of the \$67 million or more that FAO estimates is needed to carry out its role in the longer-term rehabilitation and reconstruction of the fisheries and agriculture sectors. Italy, Japan, Belgium, Norway, Germany are the leading donors. Australia and the U.S. have thus far not contributed to FAO's response efforts in the region. End summary.

2. FAO Director General Jacques Diouf convened a meeting of permreps from affected countries and potential donors to provide a briefing on FAO's actions and plans thus far. Deputy Director General David Harcharik, Director of Emergency Operations & Rehabilitation Anne Bauer, and Rehabilitation & Humanitarian Policies Unit Coordinator Richard China also participated. Diouf made the following points:

-- FAO initially appealed for \$26.5 million for projects in six countries (Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Seychelles, Somalia and Sri Lanka); but "the needs for early recovery of agriculture and fisheries far exceed the appeal by FAO."

-- FAO's priorities are (1) coordination and technical assistance; (2) supply of fishing gear, repair and replacement of boats, rehabilitation and restocking of fish ponds, early rehabilitation of harbors, anchorages, fish storage and processing; (3) seeds, tools, and other agricultural inputs; and (4) repair of irrigation and drainage infrastructure, and reclamation of crop land affected by salt water flooding.

-- FAO has already received \$12.5 million from 7 donors (most notably Japan, Norway, Germany, UK), and contributed \$1.5 million from its own Technical Cooperation Program funds. Other donors (principally Belgium, China, Canada) have committed an additional \$6.5 million. (Later at the same meeting, Italy announced a major contribution; see below.)

-- Germany, Norway and UK contributed to FAO's new Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA), a revolving trust fund that allowed FAO to initiate some activities rapidly.

-- Additional funding is being negotiated with a number of donors, with an estimated \$45.8 million in the pipeline, and possibly as much as \$67 million.

-- Needs in the area remain large, but the unprecedented donor response to the UN and NGOs poses "a high risk of inappropriate and fragmented assistance for recovery." The need for coordination and technical guidance on practical modalities has become a priority.

-- FAO has deployed an additional 35 international experts and recruited equivalent national teams to assist governments of affected countries to deepen needs assessments and develop results-based program frameworks. These efforts are backstopped by a task force in Rome and by the FAO Regional Office in Bangkok. Also, direct assistance to affected populations has started.

-- The EU has called on FAO to take the lead in coordinating rehabilitation of the fisheries sector in the region.

3. The ensuing discussion and Q&A session included the

following points:

-- The Philippines Ambassador, speaking on behalf of the Asia Group, expressed thanks to donors and FAO for their support.

-- Italy announced a contribution to FAO of \_ 9.5 million (about \$12.4 million).

-- Various participants reiterated the need for coordination among donors, within the UN system, and with the international financial institutions.

14. Comment: Among the traditional large contributors to emergency relief activities, Australia and the U.S. are conspicuous by their absence in responding to the FAO's post-tsunami appeal. There may be good reasons -- including FAO's weak performance in certain other emergency operations -- for channeling the bulk of USG relief assistance to the affected areas through other U.N. agencies and non-governmental mechanisms. But the complete lack of a U.S. contribution to date may compromise our ability to achieve other objectives within the organization, particularly as we attempt to influence the "after-action" evaluative process concerning FAO's failures with its emergency locust control operations last year. FAO has a clear mandate and better track record in multilateral efforts to restore livelihoods in fisheries and agriculture.

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